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ABSTRACT

Historical archaeology has evolved from an early preoccupation with famous houses and forts to a study of capitalism around the world. Archaeologists study the cultures and interrelationships of the colonizers and the colonized as they negotiated their places in an ever-expanding world system. Recent studies in South Africa, Latin America, and the United States illustrate the value of historic archaeology in teaching the stories of people whose voices were left out of the national stories. The focus of the teaching is material to the culture of the everyday bric-a-brac, technology, and symbols that people use to survive and to define their identity and their place in the world. Through public archaeology, museum outreach, and education packets, teachers and students can explore a past that touches everyone and illuminates the complexities of the present. (Contains 4 Web site addresses and 23 references.) (Author/BT)

Teaching the Impact of Globalization through Historical Archaeology.

Marilyn C. Stewart

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**Teaching the Impact of Globalization
Through Historical Archaeology
CIES March 6-9, 2002**

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Abstract: Historical archaeology has evolved from an early preoccupation with famous houses and forts to a study of capitalism around the world. Archaeologists study the cultures and interrelationships of the colonizers and the colonized as they negotiated their places in an ever-expanding world system. Recent studies in South Africa, Latin America, and the United States illustrate the value of historic archaeology in teaching the stories of people whose voices were left out of the national stories. Through public archaeology, museum outreach, and education packets, teachers and students can explore a past that touches everyone and illuminates the complexities of the present.

Historical Archaeology

Born officially in 1965 in the United States, historical archaeology, has only recently gone global, though the global seed was sown in 1977 by James Deetz in a little book on New England culture history called In Small Things Forgotten. Deetz defined historical archaeology as "the archaeology of the spread of European culture throughout the world since the fifteenth century and its impact on indigenous peoples" (Deetz 1977:5). This set the stage for the emergence of an archaeology of capitalism.

The global perspective became imperative for archaeologists researching the impact of Columbus for the Quincentenary of 1992. The search for Columbus led Kathleen Deagan and the Florida Museum of Natural History to Haiti, where they excavated Columbus' 1493 town of La Isabela and later Puerto Real, and to Conception de La Vega in the Dominican Republic. Historians collaborating with archaeologists on Spanish Missions research combed the archives of Seville in

Spain, and Deagan's work on Hispaniola and in St. Augustine, Florida, provided a regional framework for understanding the Spanish colonial system as it played out in the lives of everyday people.

Today archaeologists throughout the world are turning attention to historical archaeology in global perspective. Notable examples include Orser's work at the fugitive slave settlement of Palmares in Brazil and at the estate village of Gorttoose in Ireland (Orser 1996), Delle's studies of Jamaican coffee plantations (Delle 1998) and work in Ecuador (Jamieson 2000), Buenos Aires (Schavelzon 2000), and Australia (Burke 1999). Recent efforts to go beyond Deetz's Eurocentric definition have begun with historical archaeology of the Ottoman Empire (Baram and Carroll 2000). Another school of historical archaeology (Furani *et al.* 1999) incorporates all text-aided archaeology (Classical, Biblical, Mayan, Chinese, etc.).

Topics

What does this new global historical archaeology have to offer to a conference focused on globalization's impact on the disenfranchised and its role in the social construction of marginality? As I've said, historical archaeology studies the spread of capitalism throughout the world and its impact on indigenous people. This has meant a focus on the people who were left out of the official histories: indigenous people, including those uprooted and enslaved in distant places; immigrants, the urban poor, and women--in short, the very people who are the subject of this conference.

Historical archaeologists seek the stories of the disenfranchised in the architecture and artifacts they left behind, along with any other records of their lives that can be found: estate inventories; voter, deed, and church records; diaries, photos, oral histories, etc. As anthropologists, they try to reconstruct lifeways and worldviews, to understand cultural processes and interactions, and to track culture change. The nexus to the endeavor is material culture--the everyday bric-a-brac, technology, and symbols that people use to survive and to define their identity and their place in the world. Artifacts are paramount because they are often the only record, but also because they never lie. If you want to know how much beer someone drinks, don't ask; check their trash. If you want to know if Sally Hemings' children were fathered by a Jefferson, don't read his diary; check the DNA.

Unique Contributions

In 1991 Kathleen Deagan (104ff) outlined five unique contributions of historical archaeology.

1. The colonization process and its impacts. Her research has shown that despite the myth of the North American melting pot, it was the Spanish colonies that blended peoples and cultures, while the English colonies carefully segregated ethnic and racial populations, from the beginning.
2. The physical world in the past. Contrary to popular belief, the deforestation of Haiti cannot be blamed on colonization; it was a prehistoric problem.
3. Health and nutrition in the past. The work of Clark Spenser Larsen and others has shown that colonized Native American populations of the Southeastern U.S. were wracked by malnutrition. It was this that made them so vulnerable to epidemic diseases.
4. Documentation of the disenfranchised. Historical archaeologists in the U.S. have been busy studying the Overseas Chinese in California and Arizona, working-class neighborhoods in most major cities, slaves and freedmen on plantations and in cities, and Native Americans across the continent. Questions of ethnicity, class, and gender predominate in this research.
5. Documentation of illicit or illegal activities. Opium use in Tucson, immigrant smuggling in El Paso, and prostitution in New Orleans are some of the recent activities unearthed by historical archaeologists.

As it has moved into the global stage, historical archaeology has drawn from world-systems and critical theory. Globalization involves complex interactions among economic, political, and cultural forces and responses that are unique to each locality but linked by the impact of colonialism, eurocentrism, and capitalism. "Think globally and dig locally," urges Charles Orser (1996:204).

Critical theorists have taught archaeologists to consider that our work will be used by others for their own social and political interests and that our interpretations inevitably reflect our own biases. I think Parker Potter best sums up what most North American historical archaeologists try to do: "what I think many of my fellow citizens want--or need--from historical archaeology... is information and interpretation that helps us to understand how our lives have come to be the way they are, that allows (and encourages) us to decide whether this is good or bad, and that helps us

figure out how to live our way into the future on our own terms and in our own best interests" (Potter 1999:54).

From the perspective of North American archaeologists all this seems almost self-evident. The rest of the world has not always responded as expected, however. One of the most revealing examples is the case of South Africa.

South Africa

After a promising beginning led by James Deetz and Carmel Schrire, by 1998 South African archaeology found itself in crisis. The dominance of the goals and methods of American archaeology had created a backlash, to the effect that political activists in search of historic identities were "largely bypassing organized archaeology [and were] constructing precolonial histories for themselves," (Anonymous 1998).

In 1994 Martin Hall, of the University of Cape Town, had written a mostly glowing review of "Historical Archaeology in South Africa" for the *Bulletin of the World Archaeological Congress* (Hall 1994). Noting the growth of courses and post-graduate dissertations in historical archaeology, Hall outlined four themes that characterize the field in South Africa and elsewhere.

1. The archaeology of impact, exemplified by Carmel Shrire's study of a 17th century Dutch East Indies outpost on the Western Cape. Shrire found that contrary to the impression from historical documents, the destruction of Khoi herders was not due to the requisitioning of their herds, but rather from the depletion of their game, because hunting was the ultimate foundation of their subsistence.
2. Archaeology of the Underclass, represented by excavations of the slave lodge at Vergelegen estate, housing in the basement of the Cape Town Castle, and the back yard houses of the slaves and servants of Cape Town.
3. Archaeology of the Mind, following a structural cognitive approach, where artifacts, architecture and landscape patterns, reflect choices that reveal worldviews.
4. Archaeology of the Text, where "material culture is seen as one of a number of texts which are interactive and which can explain one another." This approach has been used to show "how free

farmers in [the Dutch East India colony of the early 18th century] were marginalized by the official hierarchy and responded [through architecture] in a 'language' of material culture."

Hall pointed to "a strong genre of politicized work" and "a concern with 'people's archaeology' – the relationship between academic practice and grassroots participation in the creation of the past" (Hall 1994). Now that South Africa had been "spliced back to its continent," Hall was looking forward to a historical archaeology that was newly free to explore the relationships with the Dutch West India colonies to the northwest, with the Dutch, British, and Portuguese colonial enterprises to the northeast, and the even older links across the Indian Ocean through Mozambique.

After this strong beginning in "peoples' archaeology," funding for historical archaeology began to dry up. University of Pennsylvania's Patrice Jeppson (1997) discusses the growing hostility to South African historical archaeology.

Newly emergent from the shackles of Apartheid, South Africans were confronted by the daunting task of constructing a multicultural pluralistic society. This required also formulating a multicultural pluralistic national identity. South Africa at the time had a very strong national identity built on the myth of the Great Trek of the Afrikaners, that they were the people chosen by God to spread civilization to the African interior. Most anthropologists had actively engaged in building the edifice of the myth, with their "ethnos theory," or *Africaner Volkekunde*. In this view each *volke* had its particular physical and psychological characteristics, which were expressed in its culture. Anthropologists who disagreed with this apartheid approach to anthropology and archaeology were harassed, and two politically active social anthropologists were murdered. Because the *volkerkundists* appropriated the terminology of the American culture history school of Anthropology, modern historical archaeologists are encountering fierce resistance in a climate where ethnicity, culture, and tradition are "dirty words" long associated with racism (Jeppson 1997).

Starting with a goal of "[empowering] communities so that they may develop the ability to produce knowledge and establish for themselves a popular memory" (Gabrielle Ritchie 1990 dissertation, quoted in Jeppson 1997:65), Jeppson developed a major public outreach program of site tours, lectures, exhibits, and education packets that was initially well-received by museums and schools.

Using a strategy of "method displays," which compared and contrasted documents and artifacts to encourage critical thinking, one traveling exhibit included San, Khoi, Xhosa, British settlers, and British military to foster an "awareness of how interpretations about the past came about... as part of a historical process and [are] thus removed from a state of inviolate fact" (Jeppson 1997:73).

The exhibit was ultimately rejected because "it [did] not fit with the state-mandated school syllabus... and conflicted with the ideological structure of South African museums," wherein the culture of South African Blacks was in the domain of anthropology and completely separate from the study of pre-contact indigenous peoples under the purview of archaeology. There was no place for a multicultural, multidisciplinary approach to education in South Africa.

Challenges

A similar resistance from government and establishment archaeologists has bedeviled historical archaeologists in Mexico, where the national identity (and tourism revenue) is closely bound up with Pre-Columbian archaeology. Fournier-Garcia and Miranda-Flores (1992:446) suggest that a deeper motivation might be fear that "inferences obtained from historical archaeological studies might produce an objective view of current social and political problems" that could undermine the status quo.

The 17th century fugitive African and Indian slave settlement of Palmares provides an example of the complexities. Venerated by some as the first democratic republic in the Western world, its last king, Zumbi, hailed as a symbol of Black consciousness, Palmares appeared under excavation as "a trading intermediary between the coast and the more remote backlands," particularly in the gold trade. It survived for over 100 years because of the support of European merchants (Rowlands 1999:340-341).

I had planned to talk about work begun in Israel. The fledgling field of Ottoman historical archaeology has the potential to help build an accurate history of the multicultural past of the Levant and the social, economic, and political forces that created the current situation (Silberman 2000). I knew the challenges were great, but I was taken aback to learn that the leading proponent of this approach, Albert Glock, was murdered in 1992 (Baram and Carroll 2000). Ottoman archaeology is, however, a growing field across the Eastern Mediterranean.

There are indeed many potential mine fields awaiting practitioners of historical archaeology. The eastern U.S. provides several object lessons.

Lessons from African American Archaeology

Consider the case of the New York African Burial Ground. While the cemetery was clearly marked on historic maps, it was a surprise to find human remains 30 feet deep under an alley just off Broadway in 1991. The archaeologists were completely unprepared to deal with either the history of Africans in New York City or the very vocal activist descendant population. After a year of public demonstrations and shouting matches—and with the help of the mayor, a U.S. Congressman, and a state Senator—the human remains were moved to Howard University in Washington, D.C., a historically black institution with a proven record in African American bioanthropology. Under Michael Blakey's direction, the concerns of the African American community for the spiritual care of the remains and for research relevant to their history and culture are being met (LaRoche and Blakey 1997:97) – although plans for reinterment of the bones were brought to a grinding halt on September 11, 2001.

The Levi Jordan plantation in Brazoria County, Texas is another illuminating example. In a symposium on public participation in African American Plantation archaeology (McDavid and Babson 1997), Carol McDavid describes the lessons learned from her feasibility study of a proposed public education project on the history of the plantation that would include all its residents—gentry, slaves, and post Civil War tenant farmers. Descendants wanted insurance that they would be included from the beginning and would share genuine power. They wanted positive role models and stories of good relationships between gentry and slaves—not just the stories of hardships and oppression (McDavid 1997:121-127). The importance of a working relationship with the media was driven home by the headline: "Excavation Slowly Uncovers History's Scars." The story, inspired by the discovery of artifacts left in haste when the tenants were apparently forcibly evicted, begins "The ghosts of former slaves are whispering of an injustice done more than 100 years ago..." (Singleton 1997). To these lessons Singleton (1997) adds the importance of longterm commitment, effective advertising, and ongoing feedback.

Exhibitors at Wessyngton Plantation used genealogies, photos, and artifacts to link the lives of its historic inhabitants to descendants (Blakey 1997). At Cahawba (near Selma, Alabama) Derry (1997) built trust through teaching children to do oral history interviews. While the conservative Christian community of Cahawba did not want to hear about pagan religious practices of their ancestors, the New York African American community responded favorably to "Africanisms" such as the heart-shaped symbol on a coffin (LaRoche and Blakey 1997). Exhibitors removed watermelons from the Carters Grove slave quarters because of the negative stereotypes engendered (Matthews 1997).

Colonial Williamsburg

The leader in the field is of course Colonial Williamsburg. There, the last 20 years have seen the evolution of a hugely successful program aimed at the inclusion of the African American experience in every site in the historic area. After initial reactions of shock and dismay at a perceived threat to the myths and heroes of the southern past, Colonial Williamsburg has succeeded in conveying the message that "studying these cultures will help us better understand how colonial blacks lived and adapted to the European world around them and how the European world was altered by the presence of Africans" (Matthews 1997:108).

From the reconstructed slave quarters at Carters Grove Plantation to the walking tours and living history interpreters in the streets and homes of the capital, to dramatic performances, lectures, workshops and electronic field trips via satellite, Colonial Williamsburg epitomizes the meaningful blending of archaeology and documents to bring alive the multicultural history of Colonial North America. And for me the opportunity to experience the new Colonial Williamsburg came with "Al Roker's Colonial Christmas" on the Food Channel at Christmas time!

Cherokee Ethnogenesis

Turning to the indigenous people of the Eastern United States, I mention the work of Barbara Little on cultural survival of the Cherokee, through ethnogenesis (Little 1991). The Cherokee were known as one of the "civilized tribes" because of their written constitution, plantation economy, and Christianity—all modeled on the American system. At the core, though, the Cherokee remained Cherokee. They selected and adapted aspects of the dominant culture to suit Cherokee social patterns and cultural values. Just as they invented their own writing system for the Cherokee

language, they used American timbers and ceramics to build Cherokee style houses and meals. In these Cherokee spaces Cherokee women preserved the oral traditions and cultural values that have preserved Cherokee identity and pride to this day.

Powerful Reminders

In many cases the factual information produced by historical archaeology may seem less than overwhelming. Historians could have researched the New York African Burial Ground or the Spanish mission system or slave conditions at Vergelegen—without sinking a spade. But none of these stories did come to light until archaeologists uncovered their physical remains. Historical archaeologists asked questions that hadn't been asked before.

Perhaps even more important is the emotional impact of place and object. People are transported in time to experience the people of the past through physical contact with the places where they lived and the objects they made and used. Think of the impact of the attic where Anne Frank and her family hid from the Nazis. Or the Custer Battlefield National Monument where Custer's 7th Cavalry fell to the combined forces of the Lakota and Cheyenne. Historic places and objects remind us powerfully of things we forget at our peril, much as many might wish to forget.

What does it mean when a nation forgets an embarrassing past? Many visitors to an exhibit of "Transatlantic Slavery: Against Human Dignity" in Liverpool, England, were shocked to learn that England has a history of slavery. "Many thought slavery was an institution largely confined to the southern United States" (Singleton 1997). The fact is, the sugar islands of the Caribbean imported millions more slaves than southern North America did. Not to mention that the American colonies were British colonies!

Does the history of British slavery not have import for the descendants of those slaves both in the Caribbean and in immigrant communities in England? Is past slavery not a causal factor in the current relationships among British and Caribbean populations? And shouldn't all Britons be aware of this heritage and its lingering affects? Historical archaeology, with its ability to connect people physically with the past can be a powerful tool to teach these lessons.

Resources

It's a sad fact that historical archaeology is neither widely known nor understood. Historical archaeologists have recognized that the fault is often theirs, and the authors I've mentioned today have led the way in forging imaginative and informative public education projects. My message to educators is to keep your eyes open for excavations and museum projects that could be incorporated into your teaching. Watch for articles in National Geographic, Natural History, and Archaeology magazine. Most of the projects I mentioned, and many more, are beautifully presented on the Internet. Better yet, seek out historical archaeologists and get them involved in designing educational tools and activities that will help teachers and students make the connections that link them to world events, past and present.

Globalization is an irresistible force with a long history. No one can hope to understand its impact without studying its past, and historical archaeology offers a powerful tool for enlightenment.

Web Links

- ArchNet <http://archnet.asu.edu/archnet/topical/historic/historic.html>
- Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology <http://www.archaeology.usyd.edu.au/ASHA>
- Society for Historical Archaeology <http://www.sha.org>
- World Archaeological Congress <http://www.wac.uct.ac.za/wacact.html>

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